

## REMARKS ON DR. BREUNING'S REVISION OF THE LAMIIDS (COLEOPTERA, LAMIIDAE)<sup>1</sup>

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Dr. Étienne de Breuning has undertaken a world wide revision of the lamiids, under the title of "Études sur les Lamiaires," begun in 1934 and continuing to the present. In the introduction to his work (p. 7), Dr. Breuning proposes dividing his articles according to Aurivillius' tribal classification, and points out that no broad study of the lamiids has been attempted since Lacordaire. For infra-specific classification he adopts the names subspecies, aberration, and "morpha," defining what he understands by these terms. His infra-specific concepts are not considered in the scope of this paper. Such infra-specific names generally mean little else than vague catalogue names for all sorts of forms that diverge, in variable degrees, from the originally described pattern, and seldom have any bearing on the real problems of subspeciation. A lot of irresponsible naming is carried out on a pseudo-scientific basis that could well be named "philatelic entomology."

As to his first proposal, Dr. Breuning has in many cases diverged widely from the Aurivillius model, introducing bold modifications in the systematics of the group. Some modifications should be expected, of course, for Lacordaire's famous work is certainly outdated and deficient, but the task requires a responsible approach. Aurivillius was the last world wide specialist to deal with the longicorn beetles, and without question the most competent entomologist for an extensive revision, conscious as he was of the many difficulties involved. However, he did not attempt such a revision beyond his catalogues, which display his group concepts and provide a solid foundation for research.

As to Dr. Breuning, Aurivillius' successor in this world wide approach, it could be questioned if his bold and dogmatic attempt will help or hinder present and future entomologists in their

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research. This group of insects is reputedly difficult to study, and saddled with a very large number of obscure, sometimes chaotic, problems, pending an adequate solution. It can even be said that a very conscientious effort has to be made by researchers to avoid too many errors in their work, and consequent multiplication of such problems.

Necessarily, such a broad study not only requires a good morphological knowledge, with all pertinent information for establishing affinities and grouping in systematic units, but also obliges the student to acquire an adequate familiarity with the many nomenclatorial aspects. These can, of course, be treated independently in papers dealing with strictly nomenclatorial problems involving priority of names, etc. On the other hand, a serious study of insects can hardly be divorced from their nomenclature, and most certainly no revisional work could dispense with this foundation. One single example of Breuning's work illustrates the lack of consideration of these requirements.

In dealing with his twelfth tribe, AGNIINI (p. 137), Breuning credits it to Thomson, 1864, which is correct, but enlarges his concept of the tribe by including Lacordaire's LAMIDES, MONOCHAMIDES, and AGNIDES (1869), and adding POTESNEMIINI Aurivillius, 1921, all under what he calls "le nom ancien de Thomson." This would make one believe that he is binding his work on a strictly priority base, and that Thomson's AGNITAE really have precedence on the LAMIINI and MONOCHAMINI. Several genera are excluded and others included in this new tribal concept, which could of course be quite reasonable. The discussion of this concept, however, is not what I have in mind, and furthermore would require study by someone thoroughly familiar with the groups involved.

But, in his consideration of the LAMIINI, of the ten genera listed in the Junk catalogue, he removes all but *Lamia* Fabricius to the tribe PHRISSOMINI, innocently unconscious that by leaving *Lamia* in his AGNIINI he not only sinks the tribe LAMIINI, but the subfamily LAMIINAE as well, and that his "Études sur les Lami-aires" becomes hardly less than a ridiculous title. At first it seemed that some slight mistake had been committed in his generalities on the tribe AGNIINI, but the occurrence of *Lamia* in his generic keys (p. 138), as well as his treatment of *Lamia* as the first genus of the tribe (pp. 183-184), leaves no doubt as to



what he proposes. Fortunately, Dr. Breuning's procedure and his priority schedule are far from being correct, for he overlooked some important aspects:

1) It is evident that Breuning blindly followed Lacordaire and the Junk catalogue, in their minor category names. Judgment was not applied. Thus, "le nom ancien de Thomson" (AGNITAE) happens to be more recent than Lacordaire's LAMIIDES and MONOCHAMIDES, referred to 1869. Resort to pertinent bibliography would have shown that not all of Lacordaire's group category names entitle him to their priority. He would also verify that Thomson, in 1864, used all three names in the following sequence:

14° Division.	LAMITAE VERAЕ.	(p. 66),
24° Division.	MONOCHAMITAE.	(p. 80),
26° Division.	AGNITAE.	(p. 83).

(Breuning's page reference to this last tribe should be corrected to 83, and not 36 as quoted by him).

If he went further, he would find that Thomson had previously used the name MONOCHAMITAE in 1860 (p. 93), which definitely rules out the supposed priority of "le nom ancien de Thomson," the AGNITAE.

But this is not all. The tribe LAMIINI is very much older than Lacordaire, 1869. In both the 1860 and 1864 Thomson publications, it is treated in a tribal concept (see Thomson, 1860, pp. VIII, XIII, XVI, 1; 1864, pp. 13, 14, 43) and not merely as minor group divisions, as the MONOCHAMITAE and AGNITAE. It does not matter that Thomson got his generic concept of *Lamia* all wrong, by taking Fabricius, 1792, as a reference, selecting *Lamia gigas* Fabricius, 1792, as the type of the genus, and reducing *Petrognatha* to a synonym of *Lamia*. Thomson overlooked the 1775 Fabrician reference, in which the name *Lamia* appeared for the first time, and so selected for a type a species of posterior date in relation to the originally included species. Among the thirty-three *Lamia* species listed in the 1775 title, *Cerambyx textor* L., 1758, figures as number 5 (p. 171), and as far back as 1810, Latreille selected this species for the type of the genus *Lamia* (p. 431), a selection that has never been questioned since Thomson (see the Junk catalogue, p. 70). The genus has also been reduced to its type species at least since Lacordaire, 1869 (p. 297), a point of view accepted by Breuning (pp. 183-184).

Lacordaire, 1869, in the treatment of his "Longicornes," divides them into three subfamilies: PRIONIDES, CERAMBYCIDES, and LAMIIDES. This last subfamily is characterized and divided into tribes (see pp. 238-242), one of which is his LAMIIDES VRAIES. These he further subdivides into divisions and sections (unnamed), and groups with names that correspond closely to the tribal concepts in the Junk catalogue. Dr. Breuning's page reference to Lacordaire's LAMIIDES (p. 293) refers to the minor tautonymic group in Lacordaire's system. The discussion of the validity of the name LAMIINI is superfluous, for it is of unquestionably old vintage and one of the cornerstones in the classification of the longicorn beetles. It has even been used, over a hundred years, as a family name with a proper modern suffix designation (LAMIIDAE), as can be seen in Newman, 1842, p. 275, and White, 1855, p. 347. Pascoe, 1864, not only used it as a family name, but divided his LAMIIDAE into subfamilies, with their distinguishing characters (pp. 6-9), and the LAMIINAE (p. 7) is one of them. This subfamily division was transcribed in the first volume of the Zoological Record, 1864.

2) No taxonomist should forget that there is always a stable core and main stems and branches in systematics, which avoids the chaotic situation that would follow in a system admitting all sorts of divergent personal opinions. Thus, a genus is primarily defined by its type species or genotype, which once recognized in any form, original or subsequent, is the cornerstone for any generic concept. This concept can be enlarged, and characters emended to admit other species, but in the reverse procedure, all can be taken out except this cornerstone single species which is the type of the genus. Of course, a genus can be synonymized, or in a lumping process this type can be superseded on a priority scale, but if revalidation or splitting should later occur, the type species has to be acknowledged again. A genus can lend its name to higher level groups, in such a manner that the genus *Lamia* can be, and in this case is, the type genus of a tribe (LAMIINI), and this in turn can be the stable tribe of a subfamily (LAMIINAE), which can be the main subfamily of the family LAMIIDAE, if the group is considered in this rank.

Dr. Breuning has to accept this arrangement for the LAMIIDAE (admitted by many, including the Zoological Record, with a family rank), through the LAMIINAE, the LAMIINI, right down to

the genus *Lamia* Fabricius, 1775, with its type species, *Lamia textor* (L., 1758). Many ancient genera, as in this case, have grown up to a status of present day families or subfamilies, with a tautonymic linking from generic to family or subfamily name.

Thus, Dr. Breuning's tribal concept could be an enlargement of the tribe LAMIINI, to include the MONOCHAMINI, the AGNIINI, and the POTEMNEMIINI, but could in no manner of means take the name AGNIINI, except if he deliberately wishes to sink the subfamily name LAMIINAE (or family name LAMIIDAE). But to do this he would have to supply very convincing arguments and until such arguments are produced, the name of his twelfth tribe (AGNIINI) will have to revert to "le nom le plus ancien": LAMIINI.

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